

THE GUARDIAN

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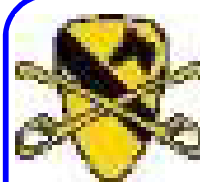
Located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, [The Ford Museum's](#) permanent exhibits allow visitors to actually participate in history while reviewing the lives of President and Mrs. Ford. A succession of feature exhibits draw upon the holdings of the entire Presidential Libraries System, Smithsonian Institution, National Archives, and others.



Located at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, [The Ford Library](#) collects, preserves, and makes accessible a rich variety of archival materials on U.S. domestic issues, foreign relations, and political affairs during the Cold War era. The Library offers exhibits, special events, education partnerships, and reference services.



FORD'S NAVY YEARS - Gerald R. Ford, the second person from the right in the front row, poses with fellow Gunnery Officers on board the USS Monterey during his World War II years, Oct. 24, 1943. When Ford entered the White House in 1974, he became the fourth consecutive President to have served in the U.S. Navy. Photo from National Archives and Records Administration



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RATS FOR A RAT

Medics Clear Rats From Saddam Hussein's Bunker

By Maj. Bobby Hart, USA
Special to American Forces Press Service

BAGHDAD, Dec. 26, 2006 – It was a scene straight from “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” or maybe “Willard.” American soldiers walking through a dimly lit, underground command bunker once used by a brutal dictator, now filled with hundreds of rats. Throw in a snake or two, and you have the perfect setting for a horror movie.

But it was not a movie.

Soldiers of the 3rd Medical Command, Fort Gillem, Ga., found themselves in just such an environment when they went to investigate a potential rat infestation.

Civilians on a forward operating base near Baghdad reported they had seen increasing numbers of rodents in the area surrounding what was known locally as Saddam Hussein's presidential bunker — a massive, two-level, network of tunnels and rooms estimated to be able to support upwards of 100 people for sev-



Rats devoured cases of military rations left in Saddam Hussein's underground bunker outside Baghdad. The rats then used the boxes for nesting. U.S. Army photo by Maj. Bobby Hart



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Van Sherwood, preventive medicine officer for Task Force 3rd Medical Command, developed and executed a plan to rid Saddam Hussein's bunker of rats. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Sam McLarty

eral months.

The bunker included meeting rooms, a kitchen, huge underground generators, restrooms, showers, private living quarters and rats. Lots and lots of rats.

Army Lt. Col. Van Sherwood, a 3rd MEDCOM preventive medicine specialist, said he had seen rat infestations before, but nothing compared to

The Guardian is published monthly by Dennis Blessing, Service Officer of the Madera County Veterans Service Office. It is freely issued, via email, to all Madera Veterans and Service Organizations.

The primary purpose of this publication is to provide County Veterans with a timely news source; effectively informing veterans of VA up-dates and other pertinent information. Hopefully, it will also serve as an inter-group vehicle, announcing important activities and information offered by other local service organizations.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

Dennis Blessing, Publisher

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Rats filled every nook and cranny of a huge underground bunker near Baghdad. U.S. Army photo.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3, RATS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2, RATS

what he saw when he pulled open the doors and entered Saddam's bunker.

"We saw some rats around the entrance when we walked up with our lights," said Sherwood, a Gainesville, Fla., native and graduate of the University of Florida, who currently works at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington, D.C. "Once we opened the doors and walked in, it was like rat heaven."

Sherwood said American Special Forces troops had taken over the bunker and used them for operations and storage until January 2006. When they left, they left behind pallets of military food rations and water.

"I really had no preconceived idea of what to expect when I heard they had a rat problem," Sherwood said. "I've been called out on these types of cases before, and most of the time, they are pretty mundane. For most people, one or two rats can be an infestation. As soon as we opened the doors, you could see rats scurrying down the corridors and could smell the rat urine. I knew then there were a lot of rats there."

The rats had moved in to take over the bunker when the American sol-

diers left and the limited access hindered the entry of predators. The rats had a secure nesting area with a high-calorie, high-protein food source and water. A healthy female rat is capable of producing a brood of around a dozen offspring monthly. It didn't take long for the rat population to reach epidemic proportions.

Until Sherwood and his rat patrol arrived, about the only thing the rats had to worry about was the snakes — one which was tentatively identified as a sand boa estimated to be at least five to six feet long.

"We knew we had to get rid of the rats some way, but it wasn't as easy as it might seem," he said. "There were so many cracks and crevices that they could easily escape the bunker and go to ground level, where there were hundreds of rodent burrows that would provide them harborage."

Sherwood said the last thing he wanted to do was to take away the food supply and water or do anything that would drive the rats out of the bunker to the base camps to forage for their next meal.

The rats had devoured most of the military rations — they ate everything but the salt and pepper and Tabasco sauce — and shredded everything else except the spoons to use for

nesting material. The cases looked intact, except for one or two small holes in each.

"I think that was the most surprising thing," Sherwood said. "The boxes looked fine, but when you picked them up they were empty except for the ones that had nests built in them."

Another surprising thing was the consistency with which the rats emptied the water bottles, which were almost all chewed through at the same height on the bottle with the holes all being very similar in size.

Sherwood decided to place poison near the now-empty pallets, which still contained ample food for the thriving rodent population, to rid the area of the problem. He said after placing the poison, his team returned and picked up dead adult rats by the hundreds and estimated many more may have died in their nests or in underground burrows.

The body count of the dead rats did lead Sherwood to believe the problem had been solved and shouldn't happen again.

"Absolutely," he said. "Once we got rid of the population and cleaned out the food and water, there was nothing down there that would make a rat want to go there."



Only an occasional snake, like this sand boa, kept Saddam Hussein's command bunker from being a total rat heaven. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Sam McLarty



MASTERS OF IMPROVISATION

American troops in Iraq have become masters of improvisation, like bolting jury-rigged armor to humvees to shield themselves from sniper fire and shrapnel. Lately, an even more novel item has joined their battle kits. Stratford, N.J., mom Marcelle Shriver recently got a call from her son Todd requesting ... Silly String. Marines working with his unit in Iraq had shown the Army combat engineer how it can be used to detect trip wires. Before searching buildings, for example, personnel spray doorways from at least 10 ft. away with streams of foam--and see if they're snagged by barely visible wires, which are often affixed to bombs. The Army acknowledges the off-label use, and Marine spokesman Captain Jay Delarosa says, "We force Marine trainees to improvise." Shriver is raising money to mail string to Iraq (aerosol cans are haz-mat and costly to ship). So the next time you waste string at a party, remember it could save a life.



AIR SUPPORT - An AH-64 Apache helicopter from the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division provides close air support for a



AMERICAN FORCES INFORMATION SERVICE **NEWS ARTICLES**

Armed forces bowl



Brad Wanek (left) and Andrea Harmon arrange giveaway items at the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Pep Rally in Fort Worth, Texas, Dec. 22. Wanek is with Bell Helicopter, and had asked Harmon and her group, Give 2 to the Troops, to partner with Bell at the Armed Forces Bowl. Give 2 to the Troops is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting deployed U.S. troops with care packages and letters from all over the nation. (Photo by Annette Crawford)



Judy McBride arranges giveaway items at the Bell Helicopter booth at a Dec. 22 pep rally at Sundance Square in Fort Worth, Texas. The Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl kicks off at 7 p.m. Dec. 23 at Amon G. Carter Stadium in Fort Worth. McBride is an employee of Bell Helicopter. Photo by Annette Crawford



3. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Dee Brown hands out promotional items Dec. 22 at the Navy booth at the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Pep Rally in Sundance Square in Fort Worth, Texas. The bowl game, pitting Utah vs. Tulsa, kicks off at 7 p.m. Dec. 23 at Amon G. Carter Stadium in Fort Worth. Photo by Annette Crawford

ARMED FORCES BOWL CONTINUED



AMERICAN FORCES INFORMATION SERVICE **NEWS ARTICLES**

Dee Bash sits in an authentic World War II jeep, on display at the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Pep Rally in Sundance Square in Fort Worth, Texas, Dec. 22. Bash is with the Military Vehicle Preservation Association, a living history organization. Photo by Annette Crawford



A spectator at the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Pep Rally in Fort Worth, Texas, tries out the America's Army video game at the Army booth Dec. 22. The Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl kicks off at 7 p.m. Dec. 23 at Amon G. Carter Stadium in Fort Worth. Photo by Annette Crawford

Captain Cane, the University of Tulsa mascot, gets the crowd going at the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Pep Rally in Sundance Square in Fort Worth, Texas, Dec. 22. The Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl kicks off at 7 p.m. Dec. 23 at Amon G. Carter Stadium in Fort Worth. Photo by Annette Crawford



FROM THE FRONT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE



MOSUL PATROL - U.S. Army 1st Lt. Andrew Kochli, of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss, Texas, patrols a street in Mosul, Iraq, Dec. 14, 2006. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Katherine Tripp



The setting sun lights up the overgrown entrance to Camp X-Ray, the first detention center at Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for enemy combatants captured in the global war on terrorism, Nov. 14, 2006. In use for four months in 2002, Camp X-Ray was replaced by Camp Delta, a more permanent facility better suited for the safe and humane care of detain-



The setting sun lights up what was once detainee cells at Camp X-Ray, the first detention center at Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for enemy combatants captured in the global war on terrorism, Nov. 14, 2006. In use for four months in 2002, Camp X-Ray was replaced by Camp Delta, a more permanent facility better suited for the safe

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